

Common of the Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church
Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church
Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe
La Crosse, Wisconsin
31 July 2020

Ezek 43, 1-2. 3c-7a
Ps 84, 3. 4. 5. 10. 11
Heb 12, 18-19. 22-24
Lk 19, 1-10

Homily

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The reality we celebrate today is the heartbeat of this shrine. It is what makes the Shrine alive, a holy place, a place of prayer and peace. Today, we celebrate the truth that, since the Solemn Dedication of the Shrine Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Christ, God the Son Incarnate, has been dwelling here and been active here for the salvation of souls. Here is realized the wonderful vision of Ezekiel the Prophet. Here is “the temple [is] filled with the glory of the Lord.”¹ Here one hears the powerfully concrete words of Our Lord: “Son of man, this is where my throne shall be, this is where I will set the soles of my feet; here I will dwell among the children of Israel forever.”²

Were Christ not here, in an extraordinary way, it would make no sense to come here on pilgrimage. The pilgrim is like Zacchaeus who climbed a sycamore tree because he wanted to see Our Lord.³ The pilgrim leaves his familiar surroundings to climb the pilgrim trail leading to the Shrine Church because he wants to meet Our Lord. He indeed sees Our Lord, he encounters Our Lord, praying in the Shrine Church before the Blessed Sacrament, in the Sacrament of Penance and, most wonderfully of all, in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Through prayer and the Sacraments, Our Lord says to the pilgrim, as He said to Zacchaeus, “I must stay at your house today,”⁴ and “[t]oday salvation has come to this house.”⁵ The pilgrimage attains its end, when Christ has come to dwell in the heart of each pilgrim, in the pilgrim’s home, through the mystery of His living presence with us in the Church.

¹ Ez 43, 5.

² Ez 43, 7.

³ Cf. Lk 19, 3.

⁴ Lk 19, 5.

⁵ Lk 19, 9.

When the Virgin Mother of God, by God's gift, appeared on Tepeyac Hill from December 9th to 12th in 1531, in order to manifest to all her children the mystery of God's all-merciful love in the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, she asked immediately that a chapel be built in which she could receive pilgrims. Her image was enthroned in the chapel, even as it is enthroned today in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, so that she could draw her children to her Divine Son, as has been and is always her mission.

The reality of the encounter with the glorious Christ Who, since His Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, descends from His place at the right hand of God the Father to be with us in the Church is strongly underlined by a particular favor granted by God during the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe. At the culmination of the apparitions, when Saint Juan Diego opened his tilma, his mantle, before Bishop Juan de Zumárraga to show him the miraculous roses which he had found, thanks to Our Lady, on Tepeyac Hill, God left the living image of Our Lady on the tilma, so that pilgrims could encounter her in a most powerful way, when coming on pilgrimage.

The mosaic of the image in this church strives to reproduce as perfectly and as beautifully as possible the miraculous image on Saint Juan's tilma, so that the pilgrim will be powerfully drawn to her who unfailingly draws him to Our Lord. Here, the pilgrim experiences the truth, the great reality, of a consecrated church, in which he truly approaches "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."⁶ Here, truly, the pilgrim meets "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,"⁷ God the Son Incarnate in the Heavenly court of "countless angels" and the "assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, "the saints."⁸

Today, in a particular way, Our Lady draws us to the Shrine Church, in order that we may meet her Divine Son Who alone is the salvation of the world. In the midst of an international healthcare crisis, which from a human point of view presents seemingly countless contradictions, and in the midst of an outbreak of anarchical and nihilistic violence, which denies the eternal truth, beauty and goodness of the Redemptive Incarnation, Our Lady invites us to turn, first of all and most of all, to Our Lord Who alone can save us from the horrible sins which would destroy us as individuals and as a society. Even as she did for the

⁶ Heb 12, 22.

⁷ Heb 12, 24.

⁸ Heb 12, 22-23.

wine stewards at the Wedding Feast of Cana, she takes us, in our moment of desperation, to her Divine Son with the simple command: “Do whatever he tells us.”⁹

Today, the false prophets of the world tell us that, as a result of what is happening today in our nation and world, our life will never be the same. They tell us that we have to reset our lives, in other words, to organize our lives according to principles which they dictate to us. But our life in Christ, manifested to us by Our Lady of Guadalupe, is always the same, even as Christ Himself “is the same yesterday and today and for ever.”¹⁰ Yes, our lives have to change but not in the way that the worldly experts would dictate. Our lives have to change more and more into Christ. Our hearts must be more and more purified of sin and responsive to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, animating us for every good work. Only Christ can accomplish the miracle of the transformation of our lives, and He is here to do it, if only we, with humility and purity of heart, gives ourselves completely to Him, as Our Lady instructs us to do and guides us in doing.

Let us never again follow the worldly wisdom of closing our chapels and churches in a time of crisis, depriving ourselves of the most privileged encounters with Christ Our Lord and Savior, but rather let us make our churches ever more open, so that we have access to great reality we celebrate today: Christ living for us in His holy temple, in order to heal us and strengthen us until the day of His Final Coming at the end of time.

Our Lady’s Knights of the Altar serve directly Our Lord here present under the maternal guidance and discipline of His Virgin Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe. The boys and young men who are Our Lady’s Knights devote themselves to serve at the altar to which the glorious Christ descends to make present anew His Sacrifice on Calvary by which He has saved the world. May the Knights who are honored today – Gregory Kusmitch and Michael Sueppel – grow ever stronger in their service of Our Lord at the Altar of His Sacrifice and may every aspect of their lives reflect the holiness of their service of Our Lord as Our Lady’s Knights.

Profoundly grateful to God for the gift of this sacred place and of His dwelling with us here, let us, one in heart with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, lift up our hearts to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus. Let us recognize here Him Who is the “compassionate gaze”

⁹ Jn 2, 5.

¹⁰ Heb 13, 8.

of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Him Who alone is our “help” and our “salvation.”¹¹

Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven, have mercy on us!

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us!

Saint Juan Diego, pray for us!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE

¹¹ “... mirada compasiva ... auxilio ... salvación.” “Apéndice A: *El Nican Mopohua*,” en Carl Anderson y Eduardo Chávez, ed. y tr. Gerardo Hernández Clark, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Madre de la civilización del amor* (México, D.F.: Random House Mondadori, S.A. de C.V., 2010), p. 214, n. 28. English version: “Appendix A: *The Nican Mopohua*,” in Carl A. Anderson and Eduardo Chávez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), p. 214, no. 28.